Fall in rubber prices

1646. SHRI CO. POULOSE: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that natural rubber producers are facing serious crisis due to the constant fall in price; and

(b) if so, the details of steps Government have taken to bail out the producers from the present crisis?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDI): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. However, in order to ensure a reasonable price to the rubber growers for their produce the Government of India, under the provisions of the Rubber Act, 1947, has fixed and notified the minimum price for trading in the two most commonly used classes of Natural Rubber *viz.* Ribbed Smoked Sheet (RSS) 4 and RSS-5.

Besides, Government have also taken a series of measures to safeguard the interest of domestic rubber farmers which includes market intervention operation through STC during August 1997 to April 2001, continuing the ban on import of Natural Rubber against advance licences even in the Quantitative Restrictions free regime, restricting surge in imports of Natural Rubber by allowing imports only through two designated ports *i.e.* Kolkata and Visakhapatnam and enforcing Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) quality standards on imported rubber. The Government of India have also recently approved a proposal of the Rubber Board for export of 20,000 MT of Natural Rubber by Kerala State Cooperative Rubber Marketing Federation Ltd. (Rubbermark).